

Renée Green

Within Living Memory

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University

February 1–April 15, 2018

Houses, Transits and Movements

Casas, Passagens e Movimentos

Between September and December of 1929, the Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier was making his first trip to South America. At that time, his name was already recognized for significant theoretical contributions given to the arts and sciences. An insightful business man, he received from his friend, poet Blaise Cendrars, the news that the cities of Buenos Aires, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil; were undergoing a growing process of modernization in relation to their urban planning.

With the intention of selling his projects to the "cities of the future," Le Corbusier gave lectures at art and architecture schools in the four cities and drew up urban plans for all of them. He also conceived a project for a library in the residence of the coffee entrepreneur, Paulo Prado, one of the great philanthropists and financiers of the Brazilian modernist artistic movement. However, the library was never built and in the four South American metropolises the architect later erected only one residence in the Argentine district of La Plata, the *Casa Curutchet*, completed in 1955.

The urban plans designed for cities that were once key points in the command of European colonial policies may not have been realized, but in spite of what appeared to be a failure, Le Corbusier wrote the book "Precisions, On a Present State of Architecture and Urbanism," which was published in 1930, only a year after his great journey. The publication was accompanied by the "American Prologue" and a "Brazilian Corollary", in which were manifested the intellectual reorientation experienced by the architect during his trip to the continent.

In February of 2018, the dialogue opened by Le Corbusier with the Americas became the fertile ground for the artist Renée Green to produce the exhibition "Within Living Memory." This project occupied and activated the spaces, through April, of all floors in the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, at Harvard University. It features the result of

Green's two-year residency in the only building designed by Le Corbusier in North America, and inaugurated in 1963.

In the exhibition, with a retrospective character, works of different periods of Green's production can be seen. In this installment, she challenges the protagonism of Le Corbusier by intervening in unconventional sites of the building, such as the ceiling and the reading room, disposing installations and multimedia works. The exhibition contains videos, flags, colors, encounters, texts in several languages, photographs, and quotes that question, and at the same time affirm, the institutional aspects of the structure that hosts them.

The artist seems to ask the public what remains of the modern legacy and what has been made of this heritage in contemporary times. Are we only at the service of institutions and hegemonic cultural power, without being able to notice? Green does not deliver a definitive answer, but suggests through her conversation with the building that we, as society, are fated to fall into contradiction from time to time. And that this statement should be used to rethink our own failures, equally, from time to time.

Despite making us experience the houses of Le Corbusier and commenting, in more than one work, on the idea of living, the artist created a reality that does not seem connected to any address. The transitoriness is a constant condition and one that Renée Green does not hide in the course of the exhibition. It is possible to see the passage of time in everything: in the creation of affective ties; in the transit of words; in the circulation within the CCVA; in the structure of the texts; in the attachment of the artist to the archives; in the mixture of languages; in floating memories; and even in misunderstandings revealed by the unspoken.

If the various migrations between the Americas made by Corbusier were a determining event for the transformation of his reasoning, visiting "Within Living Memory" is to absorb some of these rediscoveries through the meeting proposed and mediated by Renée Green. It is the task of the visitor to read the message beyond the maps hung on the wall, and navigate through the power that the visual arts have to indicate other and new possible ways of perceiving the world.

Reference:

Le Corbusier. *Precisões, Sobre um estado presente da arquitetura e do urbanismo*. São Paulo: Cosac & Naif, 2014.